Baccalaureate ceremony ends one era, begins another for Kinnick High School seniors

Story and photo by Greg Mitchell
CFAY Public Affairs

The Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Chapel of Hope recently hosted a baccalaureate ceremony for Nile C. Kinnick High School seniors families and friends May 19.

"Every year the Chapel of Hope holds a baccalaureate for Kinnick High School graduates," said Jonathan Auman, Protestant youth director of Yokosuka Student Ministries. "The baccalaureate is a religious, non-denominational, ceremony. It is a low key, special, moving ceremony between parents, friends and graduates."

Honorary guest, Col. David Robinson (Ret.) was the special-guest speaker on hand providing motivational words of encouragement to the students who were celebrating their new-found status as being 'new adults'.

"Who you are and how you are will shape up what kind of person you choose to be," said Robinson. "It's on you the individual to make the right decisions in your life."

Usually held before an official graduation and/or commencement ceremony, a baccalaureate service (or baccalaureate mass in the case of institutions affiliated with the Catholic Church and its orders) is a celebration which honors a graduating senior class from a college or high school. The event is often, but not necessarily, of an inter-faith religious nature.

The history of the baccalaureate ceremony is a tradition which is believed to be traced back to the University of Oxford in 1432. It was then that all bachelors were required to deliver a sermon in Latin as a part of their academic requirements. The ceremony has been an on-going tradition at Kinnick High School for the last 8 years.

"The purpose of our program is to acknowledge the role that parents, teachers, faculty, administrators, mentors, community leaders, chaplains and friends have played in the lives of the students that will be graduating this year," said Auman. "We want to honor the students for their hard work and dedication in their academic studies."

Arguably the highlight of the baccalaureate is a candle light ceremony representing the passing of responsibilities from one generation to the next via parent to son/daughter. Graduates also gave parents a flower to represent their appreciation for their support over the last 12 years of their lives.

In all, there were a total of 30 students ready to move on to the next phase of their lives.

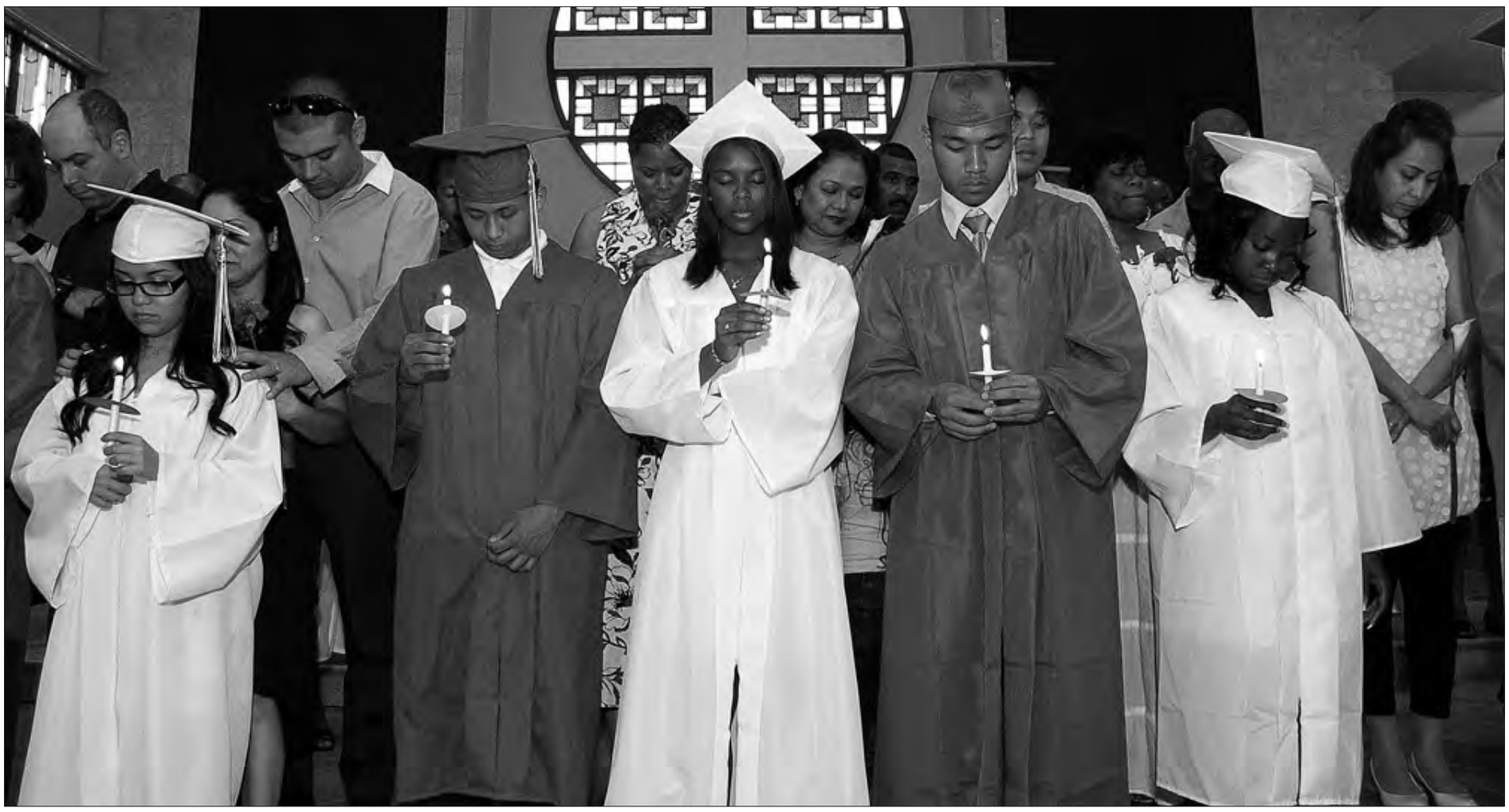
"Being able to graduate is both exciting and sad," said Erica Jenkins, daughter of Yeoman First Class (SW) Eric Jenkins, assigned to U.S. 7th Fleet, and Andrea Jenkins. "It is exciting because you are now considered a young adult and now you can use all the training you have received from your parents but in the same sense it is sad because I won't be getting that early morning wakeup call from my father anymore."

Jenkins said that she was accepted to four universities; South Carolina State, University of South Florida and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). She has chosen to start going to school her first year at S.C. State then transfer to FAMU. Her goal is to be a prosecuting lawyer.

"I am blessed to be able to have the opportunity to graduate overseas in Japan. I learned so much by being surrounded by the people (Japanese) and Japanese culture," said Jenkins. "Not many people from Charleston, South Carolina can say that they have even left the state."

In closing, she departed with these words.

"I just want to thank my parents for being my parents for the last 18 years," she said. "Now I will move on and go to school and hopefully when it is all said and done, then maybe I can give back to them by buying them a 'beach house' somewhere."



Nile C. Kinnick High School seniors from the graduating class of 2012 stand with parents while holding lit candles symbolizing the passing of responsibilities from one generation to the next via parent to son and daughter during the 2012 Baccalaureate Ceremony held at CFAY Chapel of Hope May 19.